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## McNamara's Speech Significant

What may prove to be the most significant event of the year 1967 in world history is the ensuing effect of an official revelation just made which measures American and Soviet nuclear strength today and in the future. The comparison is contained in a carefully prepared speech delivered by Secretary of Defense McNamara on Monday in San Francisco to the editors and publishers of the United Press International.

The leaders of the Soviet Union will examine the address minutely, and so will the rulers of Red China. When they have digested its contents, they will realize that the United States does not intend to fall behind in the nuclear-arms race and that, while it is willing to apply limitations on further development, these can never be agreed upon and applied unless there is mutual trust and a readiness to allow constant inspection.

McNamara's positive statements about the capability of the United States and the Soviet Union to destroy each other are terrifying, particularly the observation that "if man is to have a future at all, it will have to be a future overshadowed with the permanent possibility of thermonuclear holocaust."

The defense secretary, in explaining our "assured destruction capability," made it clear that the United States "must be able to absorb the total weight of nuclear attack on our country" and retaliate so effectively as to destroy the aggressor. He said deterrence of nuclear aggression means

"the certainty of suicide to the aggressor—not merely to his military forces, but to his society as a whole."

McNamara defined "first-strike capability" as the substantial elimination of a retaliatory strike by the nation that is attacked. He declared:

"The United States cannot—and will not—ever permit itself to get into the position in which another nation, or combination of nations, would possess such a first-strike capability, which could be effectively used against it. . . .

"Now, we are not in that position today—and there is no foreseeable danger of our ever getting into that position."

The secretary of defense emphasized that the Soviet Union does not possess a "first-strike capability" against the United States and is not likely to acquire it "in the foreseeable future." The reason he gave for this is that the United States intends to remain fully alert and "will never permit our own assured destruction capability to be at a point where a Soviet first-strike capability is even remotely feasible."

But, at the same time, McNamara conceded that the United States does not possess a "first-strike capability" against the Soviet Union either. He declared that, once war starts, it will mean a devastating retaliation which no nation would wish to risk.

Lately there has been much talk about the failure of the United States to build an anti-ballistic-missile system to

counter Russia's advance in that field. McNamara is willing to accede partially to the demands of those members of Congress and military men who have been arguing all along for such a system. But the secretary prefers to speak of it as a defense against Red China. He insists that the United States "must maintain substantial conventional forces," too, to protect its interests in other parts of the world.

Unquestionably, President Johnson read the McNamara speech beforehand, and so did his advisers. The decision to make it presumably was based on the theory that it is better to bring all the facts out into the open now so that, as McNamara phrased it, the United States could "come to a realistic and reasonably riskless agreement with the Soviet Union, which would effectively prevent such an arms race."

McNamara declared that he doesn't mind seeing the government spend whatever money is necessary for the anti-ballistic-missile system, if a "significant improvement in our security" could be assured. He believes, however, that the Russians will react "to offset the advantage we would hope to gain."

In as much as a "limited" deployment of anti-ballistic missiles is being advocated by the secretary of defense, it seems certain that this move will have an important effect on negotiations in Geneva for a general limitation of nuclear armaments.

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